Newspaper Activities to Use in the Classroom

Mini-Grant

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Prepared by: Robin C. Letendre, M.Ed. Reading Specialist Salem Continuing Education Learning Disabilities Consultant

Rationale for Newspaper Activities in the Classroom

Do you use the newspaper in your classes? Do you find that you have access to such a tremendous resource but are not quite sure how to use it? Do you see the value in the newspaper but are not quite sure how to incorporate it into your class?

You may ask yourself: why should I use newspapers? As a teacher you should use newspapers because:

- **♣** Newspapers are an adult medium. A sixth-grader who lacks reading skills does not like to be seen carrying around Dr. Seuss books, but he or she is not afraid to be seen reading the newspaper.
- **♣** Newspapers deal in reality, in what is happening here and now. This provides the motivation for reading and discussion.
- 🖶 Newspapers make learning fun.
- **♣** Newspapers are extremely flexible and adaptable to all curriculum areas and grade levels.
- **Newspapers bridge the gap between classroom and the "real" world.**
- **Newspapers build good reading habits that will last a lifetime.**
- **Newspapers can be cut, marked, clipped, pasted, filed and recycled.**
- **♣** Newspapers give everyone something to read-news, sports, weather, editorials, and comics.
- **Newspapers are a cost-effective way to educate.**

(Above bullets taken from Newspapers in Education)

Included in this mini-grant are activities that I have developed utilizing newspapers in the classroom, as well as incorporating activities from a workshop that I had attended given by "The

Lowell Sun" Newspaper in Education program a few years back. The activities are a wonderful resource that I use regularly in my class. I typically use these lessons as a support to something I am currently teaching or when I need a supplement to the topic I am teaching.

In Salem, we are fortunate to participate in Newspapers in Education, or NIE. This is a wonderful opportunity to participate in if it is offered in your learning center area.

This mini-grant has been a work in progress for some time, and it is with great pleasure that I am finally able to gather all of the material together to share with other adult educators.

All of the activities contained within this mini-grant are activities that I have either developed with the assistance of my students, or ones that I have used from that workshop. The first numbered activities are ones that I developed with experimentation with my students and the additional numbered activities are the ones that I have used from the workshop that I attended. I have enclosed those lesson plans at the end of the mini-grant. Activities 1-23 are lesson plans that I created. Activities 24-46 are activities from the workshop I attended on Newspapers in the Classroom. Enclosed at the end of this mini-grant is a glossary of newspapers terms as well.

Enjoy using them in your class!

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Glossary about Newspaper Language

Activity 1-Headline Scramble

Objective: To be able to put the headlines back in correct order, utilizing reading comprehension skills and sentence order.

Materials: headlines that have been pre-cut

In this activity, students are trying to put headlines that have been scrambled back into correct sentence order. To make this activity work smoothly, prepare headlines ahead of time. Take the headlines and cut them out in chunks for the student to be able to put in correct sentence order and then read orally to the class. Before you begin the activity, make sure that your students know what a headline is and what its function is.

Once this has been done, discussion usually ensues about the headline.

Have students experiment in finding their own headlines and cutting them out and having other students try to organize them in the correct sentence order.

Explanations of sentence order will flow naturally since the subject-verb agreement has to be there.

Recycle the materials. Rereading of the headlines will reinforce current events terminology, as well as revisit current event situations. If this is done regularly in class, follow a particular story line and see how the story changes, or remains the same.

Activity 2-By-line Scramble

Objective: To be able to put the by-lines back in correct order, utilizing reading comprehension skills and sentence order.

Materials: by-lines that have been pre-cut

This activity works in the same way as headline scramble, except that you might have to explain what a by-line is. Most students know what the headlines are, but not many know what a by-line is.

In this activity, students are trying to put by-lines that have been scrambled back into correct sentence order. To make this activity work smoothly, prepare by-lines ahead of time. Take the by-lines and cut them out in chunks for the student to be able to put in correct sentence order and then read orally to the class.

Once this has been done, discussion usually ensues about the by-line.

Have students experiment in finding their own by-lines and cutting them out and having other students try to organize them in the correct sentence order.

Explanations of sentence order will flow naturally since the subject-verb agreement has to be there.

Recycle the materials. Rereading of the by-lines will reinforce current events terminology, as well as revisit current event situations. If this is done regularly in class, follow a particular story line and see how the story changes, or remains the same.

Activity 3-Sentence Scramble

Objective: To be able to put the by-lines back in correct order, utilizing reading comprehension skills and sentence order.

Materials: by-lines that have been pre-cut

This activity is done in the same manner as Activity 1 and 2.

Prepare the sentences ahead of time and have the students unscramble and put in the same order. This activity is more labor intensive since you will have to handwrite or type out the sentences since newspaper print is too small to cut out sentences and scramble them.

This activity works in the same way as headline scramble and by-line scramble.

In this activity, students are trying to put sentences that have been scrambled back into correct sentence order. To make this activity work smoothly, prepare the sentences ahead of time. Take the sentences and cut them out in chunks for the student to be able to put in correct sentence order and then read orally to the class.

Once this has been done, discussion usually ensues about the sentences.

Explanations of sentence order will flow naturally since the subject-verb agreement has to be there.

In this activity, I do not have the students look for sentences and scramble them since it is time and labor intensive and I choose not to have them use class time for this. This is a great homework activity to assign provided the student can take the newspaper home with them.

Activity 4-Headline Spelling

Objective: to spell words in current events

Materials: Headlines

In this activity, we practice spelling using the words within headlines of the newspaper. This is a fun way to reinforce words that students may be hearing on TV or the radio, but are not sure how to spell them.

Whenever I do a spelling activity, I have the students do it in their "spelling notebook". We date the page and then do five words and see how they do. At the next class, we revisit the five words and see if the student made improvement.

Activity 5-"5 W's and How" Utilizing an Interesting Picture

Objective: to be able to answer the questions, "who, what, when, where, why, and how" and to then take that information and develop sentences, and then work to writing paragraphs.

Materials: highly detailed and interesting pictures

Paper with the words, who, what, when, where, why, and how. Words should be written and then a few lines should be skipped so the student has place to write their answers.

For this activity, I typically choose colored photographs from the newspaper since they are easier to see the details of the picture, and are more eye-catching.

I cut out pictures and put them in a folder as I read the newspaper. This is a great activity to have "on hand" for whenever class size is down, or a teacher is out and lesson plans have to be modified. It is also a great activity to use in multi-level classes because each student can write to his or her level.

Once I have selected a picture to use we begin the process of answering each question: who, what, when, where, why, how

I begin this activity with having students write on a piece of paper, "who, what, when, where, why, and how". I have them skip a few lines between each one. I also prepare my page with the same words. I always write with students. It is good modeling as well as sharing of ideas.

Whenever I do a writing activity, we do not put our names on the paper. Once we have finished our writing, we pass it around the table in the class to share what others have written. This helps to spot errors, but more importantly, to help generate ideas for those that are struggling.

Once that is done, I show them the picture again to help them spot any additional details they may have missed the first time.

At this point, we work one at a time on filling in the "who, what when, where, why, and how."

Once everyone has done the "who", we share what we have written. You may ask probing questions, but typically this leads to answering other questions that have not been written about yet. I always share what I have written, just in case someone is "stumped". I also give them the option to take my idea or someone else's if they cannot come up with "who."

This process continues for the "what, when, where, why, and how".

Once all have been completed, I have them write sentences from what they have "brainstormed". Once each 5 w's and how have been made into a sentence, a well developed paragraph is already started.

This activity encourages many students in the area of writing, and most importantly, it can be used at any level of writing ability since they can measure the complexity of the sentence based on their thoughts.

Oral discussion of the picture can also lead to better developed sentences. I will spell words for students if they are not able to so they can have a richer language within their sentences. Again, all the pictures can be recycled, since each student interprets the picture in their own unique way. Revisiting the picture at a later date, in conjunction with revisiting their writing always leads to corrections and additions that they were not able to do the first time we do the writing activity.

Activity 6-Write a Story From a Picture and Then Compare the Real Story With What You Wrote.

Objective: to look at a picture and then write a story based on the student's own ideas of what is taking place in the picture. A comparison is then made between the student's story and the actual story that was written for the newspaper article.

Materials: a highly detailed and interesting picture

Writing paper

In this activity, have the students either work on the same picture or one that they have chosen separately. I find that it works best to all work on the same picture because then you have the same framework to work with and to help those writers that may be struggling.

All that needs to be done in this activity is to brainstorm what is happening and what might be going on in the picture. Reviewing the 5 w's and how, (who, what, when, where, why, and how) might be helpful.

Reviewing how an article in the newspaper is set up helps the writer see that in this type of writing, it is in the best style to be short and concise.

Once the student has finished writing, myself included, we pass our papers around the table to look at each others ideas and to help each other with peer editing and idea development. Once we have finished writing, we turn to the story from the newspaper. Each student takes a turn reading orally if they choose to do so. We then finish the story and then go back to our own. We look at how our stories were different or similar. We compare the details from our stories with the ones from the paper. We see how accurate ours was compared to the actual news story.

This is a fun way for the students to see how well their writing matches to the ideas of the writer of the actual article.

Activity 7-Cartoon or Comics Scramble

Objective: to be able to put the cartoon back into correct comprehension order

Materials: cartoon or comics that have been precut

In this activity, I take a cartoon or comics from the cartoon section from the daily or Sunday paper.

I then cut out the cartoon into pieces so that the student has to put them back in correct order.

This activity works on reading comprehension since the reader has to understand what is going on in each separate square.

The great thing about this activity is that you can do it with multi-levels. There are more complex cartoons that can be given to higher level students and more simple cartoons that can be used with beginning readers or students who have difficulty with comprehension.

I typically pass the cartoons around the class and they can pick out the ones that they want to do. This is a fun activity to do at the beginning of the class to keep the students busy while attendance is being taken. It also makes the student know that the class will begin on time with an activity that is fun.

Activity 8-Fill in the Blank Cartoons or Comics

Objective: to be able to comprehend what is happening in the cartoons or comics and be able to come up with a logical next step in the series.

Materials: pre-cut cartoons or comics with one sequence blanked out

In this activity, the teacher pre-cuts out cartoons from either the daily or Sunday paper.

From there, you white out or blacken out the text in the boxes.

It is the job of the student and the class to determine what is going on in the comic strip and write in what they think is going on.

Photocopies could be made of the one that you want the class to work on so that all the ideas are based on the same cartoon. It is always interesting to see that they do not see the cartoon in the same way and write very different things.

This is a fun activity to use to reinforce comprehension skills and inference skills. Inference skills are difficult to teach, and this is an easy way for the student to see that there is a beginning, a middle, and an end, and something logical needs to happen. Inference helps them make "educated guesses" as to what might happen in the cartoon.

Activity 9-Editorial Cartoons

Objective: to be able to understand political cartoons and their purpose, and to write about what is happening within the context of the cartoon and current events at large.

Materials: pre-cut editorial cartoons

In this activity, I cut out editorial cartoons and as a class we have a discussion of what is happening in the cartoon, what is being satirized and how it impacts the student.

After oral discussion, we do a writing in which we consolidate ideas that were discussed.

Extension Activity

Take an editorial cartoon that is relevant and known to the class by way of discussion and have the student fill in the editorial cartoon that has had the text deleted. This is a great way to find out what the student knows about current events and if they are able to write down what they know in regards to the political cartoon.

Activity 10-Make Your Own Editorial Cartoons

Objective: to be able to understand what a political cartoon is and to be able to design a picture and text that correspond to each other when given a certain topic.

Materials: editorial cartoons for examples

Blank pieces of paper

As a follow up to Activity 9, Editorial Cartoons, I will have students create their own editorial cartoon based on what we have been talking about and looking at as a class.

It is fine to have students work in pairs; one as the artist, and the other student as the writer of the text.

In doing this activity, I always stay with a topic that we have been discussing so they have models to follow and to refer back to.

Activity 11-Vocablulary Building Utilizing Headlines

Objective: to be able to build a vocabulary centered on current events words

Materials: headlines that have either been pre-cut or directly from the newspaper.

This is an easy activity to boost sight word vocabulary for current events.

In this activity, you can either pre-cut out headlines, or just use the newspaper directly in the class.

In class, have the students read the headlines that they see. In so doing, have the students define words that they know and ask questions about what they don't know. This is an excellent way to build current events prior knowledge as well as to build community within the class by sharing what they know about current events.

Extension Activity

Word walls might also be constructed highlighting the vocabulary words that were not known, and this will help students review the words that were not known to them.

Activity 12-Vocabulary Building Utilizing By-lines

Objective: to be able to build a vocabulary centered on current events words

Materials: by-lines that have either been pre-cut or directly from the newspaper.

This activity is done in the same manner as Activity 11, expect for that you use by-lines instead.

This is an easy activity to boost sight word vocabulary for current events.

In this activity, you can either pre-cut out by-lines, or just use the newspaper directly in the class.

In class, have the students read the by-lines that they see. In so doing, have the students define words that they know and ask questions about what they don't know. This is an excellent way to build current events prior knowledge as well as to build community within the class by sharing what they know about current events.

A word wall might also be constructed highlighting the vocabulary words that were not known, and this will help students review the words that were not known to them.

Activity 13-Vocabulary Building Utilizing Stories

Objective: to be able to build a vocabulary centered on current events words

Materials: sentences that have been copied or directly from the newspaper.

This activity is done in the same manner as in activity 11 and 12.

This is an easy activity to boost sight word vocabulary for current events.

In this activity, you can either pre-write out sentences, or just use the newspaper directly in the class.

In class, have the students read the sentences that they see. In so doing, have the students define words that they know and ask questions about what they don't know. This is an excellent way to build current events prior knowledge as well as to build community within the class by sharing what they know about current events.

A word wall might also be constructed highlighting the vocabulary words that were not known, and this will help students review the words that were not known to them.

Activity 14-Utilizing the Newspaper Advertisements

Objective: to learn how to use newspaper advertisements

Materials: department store advertisements and grocery store advertisements

In this activity, I use the newspaper advertisements for many different activities and purposes. My main lesson plan for this is to look at the want ads for items to buy, establish a budget, and learn how to do various life skill activities.

Activities 15, 16, and 17 delve deeper into this process. Collecting and using grocery ads and sales fliers are a great way to build community in the class because it opens up conversation about what the students like to eat, wear, and their favorite places to shop.

A comparison activity of who shops where, what is the preferred grocery store, and how much money is spent on wants versus needs is also a great conversation starter within the class.

Activity 15-"Let's Go Shopping" With the Newspaper Advertisements

Objective: to be able to plan out a grocery list and stay within a budget

Materials: Grocery store ads

Blank piece of paper

Budget amount

Activity 15 a.

In this activity, we use grocery ads and store fliers. We do two separate activities, but based on the same idea.

For the grocery ads, I give each student a separate budget and let them know that they have to do the weeks grocery shopping with that budget. For this activity, it combines math skills with daily living skills.

To choose their weekly budget for groceries, I print out various amounts of money on a slip of paper and they choose one from the bag.

From there, they write out their food list for what they need to buy for the week. At that point, they look at various grocery store sales fliers and see if they can find what they need for the week on sale at a particular grocery store. I have them estimate the cost of goods on their list that is not on sale, for example, a box of tissues would cost 1\$, and they subtract that from their grand total.

The procedure for this activity follows: make a list of everything that you buy in one week at the grocery store, pick out a budget, look at sales fliers to compare prices, subtract each item you purchase as you shop, get as close to your projected budget as possible without going over.

Activity 15b.

For the store ads, each student has to brainstorm a list of items that we will "buy" as a class. Once that is done, fliers are passed out and we comparison shop for each item that is on our brainstormed list. For example, a new TV, jacket, sneakers, and so on. From there, we look at various stores and make a list of which store has the best prices.

This is also a fun activity to see what students want to buy and how much money they are willing to spend on something.

A variation of this activity can also be based on the grocery store ads. A student is given a set amount of money and they can only buy what they can afford.

This activity, 15a. and 15b. highlights the use of ads, comparison shopping, budgeting, and deciding upon needs and wants.

It is an "eye-opener" for many students to see that once the "money" is gone, it's gone! It is always so much fun to see who can get the closest to their budget, and to who really knows their prices!

Activity 16-Comparison Shopping With the Newspaper Advertisements

Objective: to look at the concept of comparison shopping and learn how to get the most for your budgeted dollar.

Materials: department store and grocery store sales fliers

In this activity, we delve deeper into the concept of comparison shopping and we "piggy-back" more deeply on the ideas developed in Activity 15a. and 15b.

The concept of comparison shopping is a unique one and one that many students do not participate in.

It helps to highlight the importance of having a budget.

In this activity, students need to choose an item that they want to compare. Once that has been established, the student looks through the various sales fliers to see which store has the "best deal".

Activity 17-Wants versus Needs

Objective: to be able to determine what is the difference between a want and a need and if an item is truly needed or wanted.

Materials: blank piece of paper

Sales fliers from department stores

In this activity, we begin with a discussion of what is a want compared to what is a need.

After that has been clearly defined, we begin with folding a piece of paper in half length wise and writing "want' on one side and "need" on the other.

Once that is done, I have them brainstorm everything that they need and everything they want.

After that is established, we look at the store ads and see how much things cost. If what they are looking for is not advertised, I have them estimate what it might cost, or if someone in the class has purchased that particular item to offer how much it cost.

It is always amazing to see once amounts have been assigned to items that they "want" that many students reassess if it is truly a want or a need.

Activity 18-Planning a Dinner Party with Grocery Advertisements

Objective: to be able to plan out a menu staying within the guidelines of a budget

Materials: Blank piece of paper

Grocery store ads

Budget amount

In this activity, we either decide to plan a dinner party or holiday party. Once that has been decided, we get to work!

The first part of this activity entails preparing the guest list. The student needs to figure out how many people will be attending the party before they can make the menu.

Once that has been done, a food menu needs to be made. In the process of making the food list, a discussion needs to be had in regards to if appetizers will be served, hot or cold entrees, desserts and beverages. After that has been decided, a list can be made.

Every item for the menu needs to be listed. If you wanted to take this project one step further, you could set a budget and have the student plan a party in regards to this, but we don't focus on the money aspect of this project, just the planning and the food list.

For every item that a student has listed, we break it down into its smaller parts, for example, vegetables and dip. If a student chose that for their party, they need to decide what types of vegetables they will serve, how many vegetables they will need, and what kind of dip they will serve.

As the students continue on with their lists, they need to follow this process. If the list is too extensive, you may want to limit it to one particular category such as desserts.

After this process is completed, I have the students look in the grocery store sales fliers and see if any of their products are on sale. If they are, I have them record the store and the price. The goal is to try and find as many items on the list as possible that are on sale.

Extension Activity

Add anything to the list that the student needs for the party that they did not write on their list that might be on sale, for example dinner napkins.

It is always interesting to see how many items were listed and how many can be checked off as being on sale.

Activity 19-Huh? News: Predict, Read, and Formulate an Opinion

Objective: to comprehend what is written in the news article, make inferences about why it happened, and then write a reaction to the article.

Materials: highly interesting article that makes the reader go, "Huh"?

This was one of the best classes that I have ever had in regards to class participation and group involvement. It began quite simply enough. I had read in the paper about a boy, 6 years old, who had gotten up, got himself ready for school, made his lunch and ate his breakfast, and then left the house with the plans of taking the minivan and driving himself to school! He had to return to the house since the minivan was locked. He got the keys and went back to the minivan. He got in the minivan, put it in reverse, and started off to school. The boy drove erratically for about 6 miles, when the police started to follow him. The boy did not stop for the police or pull over since he did not know he needed to do this. Eventually after being followed for some time, the boy went off the road and crashed the minivan. He was not hurt since he had not been driving too fast. The police got out of the car and they were completely shocked when they saw who was driving the vehicle. The boy was able to give the police his information and they all returned back to his home. When they got back home, the police and the boy found his mom still asleep in her bed. That was the end of the article, but just the beginning of my class!

I have never had a class with such lively discussion, banter, laughing, and debate. Not one student in the class could believe that the mother was not arrested for child endangerment or some other such thing. We went around and around debating this. We talked so much about how this boy of six was able to do so much, wake up on time, make his lunch, prepare his breakfast, and so on. My son is six, and he could do those things, but there is no way that he would not wake me up in doing so. At six, a boy is not that quiet to be able to sleep through all that work!

After we debated this article, we wrote about the boy and how capable he was and why that was so. We also wrote about why the mom was able to sleep through all of this and reasons why.

Many parents who are students were kind in their rationale, such as she must work a lot of hours, or works the third shift, or is a single mom, in addition to all of the previous ideas.

Younger students were not as kind in their thinking. They labeled the mom a drug addict or an alcoholic that was "sleeping off" their drug of choice.

These types of article don't come along very often, but when they do, "scoop them up" because from my experience they are priceless!

Activity 20-Chart Weather

Objective: to be able to read the weather section of the paper and interpret the data found on the map of the United States, as well as to make a bar graph of the information.

Materials: Map of the United States

Map of the world

Weather section of the paper

Blank paper to create a bar graph

This is a fun activity to do when you are getting to know students in your class. I typically do this the first few weeks of class so students get to learn each others name, in addition to where they used to live or where they have traveled too, or where they might like to live one day.

20a. Plotting the information on a map of the United States

For each class that we are together, we look at the weather section of the newspaper and find the temperature of the particular place that we are looking at. We then put a red dot on the map and then on another piece of paper we denote the date and list the temperature. We do this for about 3 weeks.

20b. Making a bar graph of the information After the data has been plotted for about three weeks, as a class, we then can make a bar graph of the information to compare the temperatures in different parts of the country or the world. Explanations of how to make a bar graph may need to be done to complete this activity.

The bar graph should be set up to show the parts of the United States as compared to different parts of the world.

With this bar graph activity, students learn the necessity to be precise in labeling their information.

Activity 21-Average of Boston Red Sox Players

Objective: to be able to understand percentages

Materials: Sports page

As a diehard Red Sox fan, I always am interested in seeing the batting averages of certain players, their standings in their particular division compared to other divisions, and the ERA (earned run average) of the pitchers on the team.

This is an activity that is good to do when you know you have sports fans in the class, or when you know you have a student who is struggling with percentages.

For this activity, you need to look at the sports section and find whatever topic interests you to use in regards to teaching percentages and averages. I usually start with the standings of the team.

Once we have located that as a class, we look at the place standings of the Red Sox. We then compare their standing to the rest of the teams in the American League East. Once we have done that, we compare it to the rest of the American League, and also by looking at the Central Division and the Western Division. If you wanted to, you could then compare it with the National League and compare whose averages are higher, the American League or the National League.

This is not an activity that is done often, but a few times during the spring semester. We always look at it the day after Opening Day when you can easily see how all the teams are the same since only one game has been played, and then we look at it about 2 weeks later, and then we look at it about one week before classes end. It is always interesting to see the movement

within the team standings since there is such a drastic change from the first game to two months later. If you have the same students return in September, it is always fun to look at where the Red Sox are in September compared to where they were in April.

The Red Sox do not have to be the team you track. If there are Yankee fans, or Dodger fans, or whoever the students prefer, certainly that team can be followed.

If you have students who are advanced in math, you certainly can do a line graph and compare two teams or more and how their standings change.

This activity doesn't just have to deal with baseball. You can use these ideas with any sports team or game. I find it is just a fun way to get an idea about percentages and how they work.

Activity 22-Plot on a Map the Travels of the Boston Red Sox

Objective: to be able to plot distance on a map of the United States

Materials: Sports page

Red Sox schedule

Map of United States

For this activity, you will track the travels of the Red Sox as they move across the country to play various teams. This activity is a fun way for students to learn the geography of the United States.

At the beginning of the season, I always get a schedule of where the Red Sox are playing and when. On Opening Day, I give the students a map and we then proceed to track the travels of the Red Sox.

For instance, at the start of this season, they opened in Boston. We put a mark on Massachusetts. They proceeded to fly to Los Angeles, California, so we put a mark on California and made a line from Boston to Los Angeles. We labeled this as "1" so we knew this was their first road trip. From LA, the team traveled to Oakland. This we marked as "2". The Sox then flew back home, so we drew a line from Oakland and then labeled this "3".

As a class we proceeded to do as many as we could before the semester ended. This is just a fun way learn the geography of

the country, as well as visually see how much the Red Sox travel and where their travels take them across the continental United States and Canada.

Extension Activity

Track how many miles the team flies in one season. Google maps could help with this by putting in one destination to the next and then adding up the totals.

The travel miles could be logged between road trips for the entire season.

It would be fun to have the students guess about how many miles the team actually travels in one season.

Extension Activity

Write about the "wear and tear" of travel and how this might effect the players health and well being, and additionally if they are married, their marriage and their family life. What implications does all this travel have on a player's personal life?